

GUYANA TRADES UNION CONGRESS

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REG. No. 81

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"In Unity There Is Strength"

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Critchlow Labour College, Woolford Avenue, Non Pariel Park, Georgetown, GUYANA

His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo
President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana
Office of the President
Shivnarine Chanderpaul Dr.
Regent Rd
Bourda
Georgetown
GUYANA

January 17, 2011

His Excellency:

Re: Matters deserving of the administration's attention as Guyana marks *International Year for People of African Descent*

The Guyana Trades Union Congress (GTUC) in meeting its responsibilities to the communities within which it operates, embraces the vision set out in the United Nations Declaration on the *International Year for People of African Descent*. According to UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ivan Šimonovic:

"The International Year must become a milestone in the ongoing campaign to advance the rights of people of African descent and it deserves to be accompanied by activities that fire the imagination, enhance our understanding of the situation of people of African descent and are a catalyst for real and positive change in the daily lives of the millions of Afro-descendants around the world."

The Assistant Secretary-General's comments reinforce, the General Assembly December 2009 resolution, to mark this year which calls for:

"the need to strengthen national actions and regional and international cooperation to ensure that people of African descent fully enjoy economic, cultural, social, civil and political rights, to advance their integration into all political, economic, social and cultural aspects of society, and to promote a greater knowledge of and respect for their diverse heritage and culture."

"Advancing Rights & the Rule of Law"

Email: gtucorg@yahoo.com

Tel: 592-226-2481

Email: guyanatrades15@gmail.com

Having considered the positions articulated by the UN and leaders of the international community, the GTUC believes that Guyana, as a member state, is aptly positioned to rise to the challenges by incorporating in its agenda pertinent issues to the African community. We are forwarding herein for urgent consideration, a list of issues to be addressed in the African community which requires your government's urgent attention in this *International Year for People of African Descent*. Conscious that our list below does not include every area the community would like to have addressed, the government is urged to pay special attention to these herein identified, in the development and execution of an agenda consistent with the UN's charge and goals.

Consequently given the critical role and responsibility of government in discharging the obligations imposed upon it by the United Nation's charge in this *International Year for People of African Descent*, the GTUC, as representative of labour, and given its constitutional responsibility, is seeking to ensure that government provides the utmost fillip in meeting the urgent needs of this neglected community.

The following issues are brought to your attention:

1. Respect for African Rights consistent with international conventions and charters, Universal Declarations of Human Rights, international laws, Guyana Constitution and the Rule of Law;
2. Respect the rights to Collective Bargaining and Freedom of Association in the Public Service, Public Sector and Bauxite Industry;
3. Accurate recording, respect and acknowledgment of African's contributions towards the development of Guyana;
4. Engaging African organisations and those who represent African's interests in accordance with the Constitution and Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon's calls that "the success of the International Year requires concerted efforts across the United Nations system and at the regional and national levels, with the widest possible engagement and participation, and the full integration of Africans into their social, economic and political life and at all levels of decision-making;"
5. Recommit to parliament the Opposition's 2007 Motion "That an African Land Commission be established, similar in status to the Rights Commission established under Article 232G of the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to determine the issue of ancestral land rights of African Guyanese," and pass same into law;
6. Establish a Commission similar to the June 1948 Commission that enquired into the shooting of striking sugar workers, to enquire into the May 1999 Police shooting of unarmed striking public servants who were picketing peacefully in the vicinity of John Fernandes Wharf;
7. Establish the Rights Commissions Secretariat;
8. Establish a Commission to enquire into the hundreds of extra-judicial murders from

2002-2006, as already called for by the Joint Opposition People's Partnership and the international community;

9. Implement the recommendations of the 2004 Disciplined Forces Commission Report;
10. Implement recommendations made by UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay Mc Dougall, from her visit to Guyana in 2008;
11. Release to the relevant authority the tapes of opposition politicians engaging criminal elements as a measure to aide society's effort to get to the bottom of the mayhem that held the East Coast of Demerara under siege and which has served to escalate racial tensions, result in the loss of economic livelihood, the dislocation of families and loss of lives of hundreds, women and children inclusive;
12. Develop and implement regulations to give effect to the 1997 Occupational Safety and Health Act, necessary to protect workers of Guyana;
13. Implement the 2001 Hoyte/Jagdeo Agreement to address the concerns of the Depressed Communities of Fryish/Gibraltar; Hogstye/Lancaster; Blueberry Hill/Victory Valley; West Watooka; Enterprise; Buxton; Meten-meer-zorg and De Kinderen;
14. Implement the 8th March 2000 Guyana Trades Union Congress(GTUC) /Government of Guyana Agreement which dealt with addressing crime and the development of housing complex for workers;
15. Honour the 12th December, 2008 Chief Justice (ag.) Ian Chang's ruling to "stop discriminating and penalizing Lindeners by denying them broadcasting licence" (Stabroek News, December 13, 2008);
16. Institute compulsory arbitration on the Guyana Bauxite and General Workers Union (GB&GWU) and /Bauxite Company of Guyana Inc (BCGI) impasse which commenced in 2009;
17. Return tax-free overtime achieved by bauxite workers in 1988 through their single-handed struggle which has been taken away from them by this administration even as it is maintained in the Indian-dominated sugar sector. This was awarded to the sugar sector simultaneously as it was awarded to the bauxite sector by the Hoyte administration;
18. The establishment of a national stakeholders committee to look into the vendors' problems that respect their right to work and participation in decision-making that impact their lives;
19. Return the yearly grants to the Guyana Trades Union Congress and Critchlow Labour College (CLC) withheld since 2000 by the Guyana Government, since the opportunities granted by CLC are predominantly accessed by African Guyanese and offer youths a second chance;
20. Conduct public inquiry into the GB&GWU's charges of discrimination against bauxite workers and their communities based on their race, political geography and perceived

political allegiance;

21. Establishment of a Guyana Presidential Research Institute where information on the work and lives of all past presidents can be available to the public;
22. Establish the Procurement Commission to ensure equitable allocation of contracts;
23. Establish a national stakeholders commission for the distribution and re-evaluation of lands and house lots;
24. Resizing and relocation of the Georgetown Prison and the revamping of the penal and custodial system to facilitate more community services as penalty for minor offenses;
25. The reintroduction of National Service to provide opportunities to youths and those in need of second chances.

As citizens of this world, it is opportune to reiterate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which affirms, "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." To this end Guyana as signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and your administration as the manager of the state's business is expected to work meaningfully towards the realization of the UN Secretary General's call to eradicate racism once and for all.

Respectfully.

Lincoln Lewis,

General Secretary.